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## DOCUMENTS

*"A Memorandum of M. Austin's Journey from the Lead Mines in the County of Wythe in the State of Virginia to the Lead Mines in the Province of Louisiana West of the Mississippi," 1796-1797.*

THE journal of Moses Austin given below is published through the courtesy of his grandson, Colonel Guy M. Bryan, of Austin, Texas. The original is among the Austin papers now in possession of Colonel Bryan, which include a large mass of highly valuable material relative to both Moses Austin and his son Stephen, and especially to the Anglo-American colonization of Texas. The journal may be appropriately introduced by the following sketch,<sup>1</sup> which was written by Stephen F. Austin for the information of his younger brother, J. E. B., or Brown, Austin :

"The idea of settling North Americans in Texas originated with my father, Moses Austin.

"My father was a native of Durham, Connecticut, and was regularly educated a merchant. He was a partner of the importing house of Stephen Austin and Co., in Philadelphia, and married Miss Maria Brown in that city, a native of Morris County, New Jersey, shortly after which a branch of the mercantile house was established in Richmond, Virginia, under the firm name of Moses Austin and Co., and my father settled in that city.

"Some years afterwards, the company purchased the lead-mines in Wythe County, Virginia, on New River, known as 'Chisel Mines,' to which place he removed and conducted the mining and manufacturing of lead on an extensive scale.

"He was the first who brought to this country English miners and manufacturers of lead, and he established the first manufactory of shot and sheet lead in the United States, at Richmond, and the mines on New River, Virginia.

"A brother of my father, Elijah Austin, was well known to the mercantile community of New York and New Haven as being the first who ever fitted out a ship for a sealing voyage to the northwest coast of America, and from there to India, by which means a source of commerce was opened that has since been greatly extended.

<sup>1</sup> *A Comprehensive History of Texas*, edited by Dudley G. Wooten and published by William G. Scarff, Dallas, I. 440-444.

“My uncle fitted out Captain Green, who made the first trip of this kind that was ever undertaken.

“In 1796, my father, finding the mines on New River less productive than he had expected, and having accidentally met with a person who had been in the mining district to the west of Saint Genevieve, west of the Mississippi River, in Upper Louisiana, and who gave a favorable account of the prospects in that country, determined to visit it. After much difficulty, he obtained the necessary passports from the Spanish minister, as at that time the Spanish possessions extended to the Pacific Ocean, and were closed to the admission of foreigners.

“During the winter of 1796 and 1797 he explored Upper Louisiana, and with his whole company nearly perished in the wilderness between Vincennes and St. Louis. At that time Vincennes was the only settlement between Louisville and St. Louis. He obtained a grant for one league of land embracing the lead-mines of ‘Mine A. Burton,’ and in 1798 removed his family from Virginia to his new grant.

“‘Mine A. Burton’ is forty miles west of St. Genevieve, and at the time my father moved there was uninhabited.

“Parties of miners spent the summer there digging for ore, and packed in the lead on horses to St. Genevieve; but there had never been a single family who ventured to spend a winter, as the Osage Indians were hostile, and had succeeded in confining the French population to the town of St. Genevieve. In fact, at that time the settlements in Upper Louisiana were confined exclusively to the villages of New Madrid, Cape Girardeau, St. Genevieve, Carondelet, and St. Louis, on the banks of the Mississippi, and to St. Charles on the banks of the Missouri.

“The first family who settled permanently at ‘Mine A. Burton,’ and in what is now called Washington County, in the State of Missouri, was that of Elias Bates, a nephew of my father, who moved there from St. Genevieve in the fall of 1799. The following spring, my father and several who followed him from Virginia removed, and during the summer he collected around him a sufficient force of Americans to make a permanent stand against the Osages and other hostile Indians.

“They were, however, greatly exposed, and in 1802 the village of ‘Mine A. Burton’ was attacked by a large party of Indians, their chief object being to plunder my father’s house and store, and to kill the Americans, or Bostonians, as they called them. He had, however, taken the precaution to provide himself, in addition to other arms, with a three-pounder, and being fully prepared for a defence, the Indians failed in their efforts and were driven back.

“My father’s house formed a kind of nucleus for the Americans who had found their way over the Mississippi, and a considerable village was formed, so that in 1803, when Louisiana passed to the United States, the country about ‘Mine A. Burton’ had begun to settle. And it was thus that the first settlement in Washington County, Missouri, the extension

of mining, the erection of regular smelting-furnaces, mills, etc., owe their origin to the enterprise and perseverance of my father.<sup>1</sup>

“Considering that when he first visited Upper Louisiana in 1797 the country from Louisville to the Mississippi, now composing the States of Indiana and Illinois, was a total wilderness, with the exception of Vincennes, on the Wabash, and Kaskaskia, and a few French settlements in the Mississippi bottoms opposite St. Louis and St. Genevieve; that he moved by a new and almost unexplored route down the Kanawha River in large flat-boats, a thing which never before had been attempted from the point where he embarked; the mountainous and wilderness country through which he had to pass between Austinville and that point; the thinly populated situation of the western portion of Virginia and the States of Kentucky and Ohio; and to this add the immeasurable distance which it was then thought separated Louisiana from the settled portion of the United States, and the universal prejudice which existed against the Spanish government; the long and tedious trip by flat-boats down the Kanawha and Ohio Rivers, and up the Mississippi to St. Genevieve, and the hostile condition of the Indians, and I think it will be readily conceded that my father is justly entitled to high credit for his enterprise in having even conceived the idea of moving his own and many other families from the interior of Virginia to so remote a country. His success affords a proof of his judgment and perseverance.

“After Louisiana passed to the United States my father’s characteristic enterprise and activity were soon apparent in the advancement of improvements, both of an individual and public nature, as the old settlers of ‘Mine A. Burton’ will abundantly testify. He acquired a considerable fortune; his standing was always high as a valuable and honorable member of the community.

“His family consisted of three children,—Stephen Fuller, the eldest, born at Austinville, Virginia, November 3, 1793; James Elijah Brown, the youngest, born at ‘Mine A. Burton’ (Potosi), 1803; and Emily Margaret Brown, born June 22, 1795, at Austinville, Virginia, who married James Bryan, was left a widow, and afterwards married James F. Perry.

“My father was a principal stockholder in the Bank of St. Louis, and may be said to have been its founder. In 1817 and 1818 that institution fell into the net of Kentucky speculators and was broken. My father was one of the chief sufferers by their manipulations; he and his family were pecuniarily ruined.

“In 1819, he proposed to me the idea of forming a colony in Texas. The treaty of De Onis had been brought to a conclusion, and the right of Spain to Texas appeared unquestionable, and grants from the Spanish authorities would therefore be valid. The project was discussed by us in Durham Hall at ‘Mine A. Burton’ for several days, and adopted.

<sup>1</sup> Schoolcraft, in his *Thirty Years with the Indian Tribes*, pp. 32–33, gives an account of a meeting which he had with Austin at Herculaneum, Mo., in the summer of 1818, and in *A View of the Lead Mines of Missouri*, etc., published soon after, he gives a description of the mining operations in the district where Austin was then located.

"In April, 1819, to facilitate us in our Texas colonization project, I started from Missouri to Arkansas, and commenced a small farm at Long Prairie, on Red River. The years 1819 and 1820 I principally spent in Arkansas, and I located a New Madrid claim<sup>1</sup> at Little Rock, the site where the seat of government of that Territory is now fixed. I was also appointed by Governor Miller one of the circuit judges of Arkansas.

"In the fall of 1820, my father came on from Missouri, and proceeded to visit the Spanish authorities of Texas at Bexar (San Antonio), the capital, and I went to New Orleans to make such arrangements as circumstances might require or permit.

"My father, after a fatiguing journey on horseback of more than eight hundred miles, through a totally unsettled and wilderness country, reached Bexar in November; his reception by the governor was discouraging. Antonio Martinez, the governor of Texas, was a European Spaniard by birth. He had received rigid instructions from Arredondo, the commandant-general, not to permit foreigners, and particularly North Americans, to enter Texas. He was not on good terms with Arredondo, therefore particularly cautious, not desiring to expose himself to the vengeance of his personal enemy.

"At the first interview my father received a most peremptory order to leave Texas immediately; he endeavored to palliate and give a favorable turn to matters by entering into a genial conversation with the governor in French, which they both understood, but his efforts were fruitless; the governor even refused to read the papers my father presented as evidence of his having formerly been a Spanish subject in Louisiana, and repeated his order, with much asperity and some passion, to leave Texas immediately.

"There was no alternative, and he left the government house to prepare for retracing his course through the wilderness to Natchitoches.

"In crossing the public square, he accidentally met the Baron de Bastrop. They had seen each other once before in the United States, having met at a tavern when travelling, many years previous. He invited my father to his room, where he lived in great poverty, but his influence with the government was considerable, and very great with the inhabitants of Bexar, who loved him for the universal benevolence of his disposition. He was a man of education, talents, and experience, and thoroughly initiated into all the mysteries of the government house.

"The object of my father's visit to the capital of Texas was explained, his papers examined, and the project of a new colony talked of; the difficulties he would have to overcome were stated and answered, and the advantages to result from it were enlarged upon; they discussed it in all its phases. The benefits which would result from the contemplated colony were apparent to him at first view.

"My father was unwell from the fatigue and exposure of his trip, and

<sup>1</sup> The "New Madrid" certificates were issued by the federal government under the Act of February 17, 1815, to those who suffered by the earthquake at New Madrid. See *United States Statutes at Large*, III. 211-212.

the baron reported him to the governor as being too sick to travel without endangering his life, and a suspension of the order for his immediate departure was obtained.

“At the end of a week the governor and *ayuntamiento* of Bexar united in recommending a petition from my father to the ‘*Ex'ra deputation Provincial de las Provincias internas orientales*,’ at Monterey, asking for permission to introduce and settle three hundred families from the United States of America at any point in Texas which my father might select.

“The entering wedge was thus placed for opening a legal passage for North American immigrants into Texas, but it required inflexible perseverance, and years of toil and labor, to drive it forward.

“A mere accident had prevented the total failure of the first preliminary step. The absence of the Baron de Bastrop, his ignorance of my father’s character and standing, or his indifference as to the success or failure of the scheme, would have defeated the whole project; for when my father met him in the square, on leaving the government house, he was determined to quit the place in an hour, being much disgusted and irritated at his reception by the governor.

“My father left Bexar previous to the confirmation of the grant, and after a tedious and distressing journey reached the settlements on the Sabine River. His provisions having failed, and the powder he had provided himself with being so damaged that he could kill none of the game with which the country abounded, he was compelled to travel the last eight days of his return with no other nourishment save the roots and acorns he could gather in the woods.

“The hardships and privations of his return, in the midst of winter, were so severe that he was taken with the fever, and confined to his bed for three weeks at the house of Mr. Hugh McGuffin, on the east side of the Sabine River. There he was met by his nephew, Elias Bates, who left Herculaneum, Missouri, some time in December in search of him, and as soon as he could travel he started with Bates for Natchitoches, where he arrived in January, 1821, very unwell and greatly afflicted with a pain in his breast, caused from a severe cold he had contracted during his trip of exposure and privation. He was fifty-six years of age, but his constitution, naturally good, had begun to yield to time, fatigue, and misfortune.

“He returned to Missouri by water, and had the happiness of being once more in the bosom of his family, now reduced to my mother and my sister Emily, my brother James being still in Kentucky at school, and I at New Orleans. My father never recovered from the exposures and privations of his return from Bexar, through Texas, and the cold he then contracted changed into pneumonia, and he died at the house of his son-in-law, James Bryan, in Missouri, June 10, 1821, in the fifty-seventh year of his age.”

In preparing the copy of the journal for publication the original has been closely followed, except in one or two small matters

of punctuation. Thus, periods have been inserted at the end of sentences. The diarist's practice is frequently to omit them; to follow this exactly would make the text unnecessarily hard to read. The title used is that formulated by Moses Austin himself. The journal is a small paper book of thirty-eight leaves, about seven inches long and four and a half inches wide.

GEORGE P. GARRISON.

#### THE JOURNAL.

On the 8. day of Decemb<sup>r</sup> 1796 in the Evening I left Austin Ville on Hors Back takeing Jos. Bell as an assistant and a Mule to Pack my baggage and that night went to Mr. James Campbells who on the morning of the 9 started with me for Kentuckey. Nothing of note took place from Mr Campbells to Cap<sup>t</sup> Craggs where we arrived on the 11<sup>th</sup> at Eve furnishing ourselves with Blankets &c at Abington as we pass.d the Morning of the 12 I left Cap<sup>t</sup> Cragg, in Companey with a Mr Wills from Richmond bound to Nashvill in the State of Tennessee. that night I arriv.d at the Block Hous, so Call.d from being some years past us.d as such but at this time in the hands of Colo Anderson, at whose Hous, it was Expected good accomedations, could be had, more so in Consiquence of his being a friend of Mr Campbells. however, it as with great Trouble, that he admitted us under his Roof, or would allow us any thing for our Horses and Mules. Colo Andersons is 36 Miles from Cap<sup>t</sup> Craggs, which, I left by Day light, takeing the road Through Powells Valle. at this place I parted with Mr Wills who took the road for Cumberland Which fork.d at this place. the road being Bad and the weather uncommonly Cold, I found it was with hard Traveling that we reach.d the foot of Wallons ridge that Night. from Andersons, to Benedict Yancy's is 34 Miles and an uncommon Mount<sup>s</sup> road. Fifteen Miles from the Block Hous is Clynch mountain and the river of the same name. I the same Day pass.d a number of Mountains and ridges, the most considerable of which are Copper Creek Powells and Wallons, as also several large Creeks and Powells River. Mr Yancys is the enterence into Powells Valley. a Wagon road has lately been Open.d into, and Down the Valley, and Notwithstanding great panes and Expençe, the passage is so bad that at maney of the mountains the waggoners are oblig.d to lock all the wheels and make fast a Trunk of Tree Forty feet long to the back of the waggon to prevent it from Pressing on the Horses. in this manner many waggons have pass.d on to Kentuckey. It was late in the Evening of the 13<sup>th</sup> that I arriv.d at the Hous of this Mr Yancys, and the badness of the weather, had made Me Determin, not to go any Further, being then 8 OClock and snowing fast, however I found it was not so Easy a matter to bring the old Man and Woman to think as I did; For when I demand.d or rather request.d leave to stay, they absolutely refus.d me, saying, that we could go to a Hous six miles Down the Val-